

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed July 24, 2007. Claims 20-32 were pending in the present application. This Amendment does not add, cancel, or amend any claims, leaving pending in the application claims 20-32. Reconsideration of the rejected claims is respectfully requested.

I. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 20-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Peairs* (US Patent No. 6,199,073). The present invention and the *Peairs* reference were, at the time of the invention, commonly owned or subject to a common obligation of assignment. It also should be noted that the present application and the *Peairs* reference both claim priority to the same parent application, the now issued 5,978,477 patent.

Further, as the present invention claims priority back to the 5,978,477 patent (filed November 21, 1996) and the chain of priority includes a continuation-in-part application (US 6,704,118 filed October 29, 1999), the effective filing date of the present application is at the latest October 29, 1999, for each of the claims, which is before the March 6, 2001, issue date of the *Peairs* reference. Therefore, the *Peairs* reference would qualify as prior art only under §102(e) (see MPEP 706.02). Since the references were commonly owned at the time of invention of the present application, and since the reference qualifies under §102(e), *Peairs* is respectfully removed as a reference under §103(c).

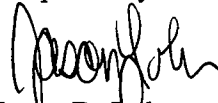
As *Peairs* has been removed as a proper reference under §103(c), Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection has been overcome and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 925-472-5000.

Respectfully submitted,



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